

New Jersey Farmland Preservation State Acquisition Program

Background

The State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) purchases development rights or farmland outright for preservation purposes under its state acquisition program. Landowners can either sell the development rights to their land and continue to own and farm the land, or sell their land outright. In both cases, the land is permanently deed-restricted for agricultural use. When the SADC purchases farms outright, it resells them at public auction as permanently preserved farms.

Criteria

This program seeks to preserve priority farms that are strategically located in each county. Priority farms are those that meet or exceed the county average in size and quality score. Minimum acreage requirements for qualifying as a priority farm in each county are: 50 in Atlantic; 10 in Bergen; 92 in Burlington; 35 in Camden; 38 in Cape May; 86 in Cumberland; 54 in Gloucester; 54 in Hunterdon; 61 in Mercer; 59 in Middlesex; 39 in Monmouth; 31 in Morris; 42 in Ocean; 16 in Passaic; 96 in Salem; 61 in Somerset; 54 in Sussex; and 72 in Warren.

Quality scores are determined based on a number of factors, including soil quality, proportion of tillable acres, proximity to other preserved farms and local support for agriculture.

Applications for farms not meeting these criteria still will be accepted and considered for approval on a case-by-case basis.

Application Process

Applications will be accepted year-round. An applicant farm that is strategically located and meets or exceeds the minimum criteria for size and quality score will qualify for immediate consideration for preservation.

The SADC and landowner will enter into a 120-day option agreement in which the landowner agrees not to market the property for that time period. This provides time for two independent appraisers to evaluate the land. Based on the findings of those appraisers and the recommendations of its own review appraiser, the SADC will certify a fair-market value and make an offer. If the offer is accepted, the landowner and SADC will enter into a sale agreement. The SADC will order a survey and title search and work directly with the landowner through closing.

Timeframe

The entire process – from application to closing – can be completed in about 12 to 18 months provided there are no major complications associated with survey, title or related issues.

For more information

For an application or more information, contact the SADC at (609) 984-2504; PO Box 330, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0330; or heidi.winzinger@ag.state.nj.us. Applications also are available on the SADC's website at www.state.nj.us/agriculture/sadc/farmpreserve.htm.